

## I AM NAVY MEDICINE, AND COMMAND MANAGED EQUAL OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM MANAGER – LT. SHANECE WASHINGTON



Lt. Shanece Washington, Navy Medical Service Corps officer and Occupational Audiologist, Regional Hearing Conservation Program Manager, and Command

Managed Equal Opportunity Program Manager at Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Command (NMRTC) Bremerton. (Official Navy photo by Mass

Communication 3rd Class Meagan Christoph, NMRTC Bremerton public affairs).

By Douglas Stutz, Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Command Bremerton

"I am Lt. Shanece Washington, Navy Medical Service Corps officer and Occupational Audiologist, Regional Hearing Conservation Program Manager, and Command Managed Equal Opportunity Program Manager at Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Command (NMRTC) Bremerton.

Washington has been in the Navy for four years and is originally from Colorado Springs, Colo. and Rampart High School 2004-2008. She is a graduate from University of Northern Colorado, 2008-2012, in Audiology & Speech Language Sciences, B.S., with her Clinical Doctorate in Audiology, AuD from University of Washington, 2012-2016.

"I am a direct accession into the Navy. I completed all of my educational training prior to joining. During my clinical doctorate training, I was offered a spot with the Navy's Audiology Externship Program, however, I had to decline the offer. I finished my residency training at the Veteran Affairs Puget Sound Health Care

System, and made the decision to join the Navy upon my completion,” explained Washington.

Washington grew up in a military family, and always knew from a young age that she wanted to work with military members or veterans.

“My father served in the Air Force as a captain and instilled a sense of responsibility and service to community in his children. It took me several years to finalize the capacity in which I wanted to serve my community,” said Washington.

Despite her relatively short time on active duty, Washington has served on both sides of the Pacific, from the Far East to the Pacific Northwest. Navy Medicine has afforded her the opportunity to serve in Yokosuka, Japan, Chinhae, South Korea, and now at NMRTC Bremerton, Washington.

That fatherly advice learned when growing up has also empowered Washington to take on a host of overlapping duties, which include Hearing Conservation Program Manager, COVID-19 Level 1 Triage provider, Occupational Audiology department head, Controlled Substance Inventory board chair, Medical Service Corps secretary, Navy Sexual Assault Prevention Response program-victim advocate, Voting Assistance Officer, Diversity Officer, and Command Managed Equal Opportunity (CMEO) Program Manager

“All of my assignments have been exciting and challenging in a variety of ways,” Washington said.

As the nation – and armed services – come to grips with confronting not just the current pandemic outbreak, but also racial injustice, Washington’s role as CMEO program manager is crucial in providing all staff members – active duty and civil service – a safe and secure setting to perform to their maximum ability.

“The CMEO program is in place to ensure an environment that is free from social, personal, and institutional barriers that would prevent service members from rising to the highest level of responsibility possible. The ultimate goal is to foster and promote an environment that prevents harassment and unlawful discrimination. There are six protected categories for which harassment and discrimination are prohibited: race, color, gender (including gender identity), sexual orientation, national origin, and religion,” noted Washington.

Washington’s role as CMEO program manager has her as the point of contact for command related equal opportunity concerns.

“I do not do this alone, but rather with a team,” Washington stressed. “Our duties include ensuring proper documentation and processing of all reports of harassment and unlawful discrimination, both formal and non-formal, providing updates regarding ongoing reports and complaints to the commanding officer, coordinating the Command Climate Assessment survey, and most importantly assessing the impact of the

CMEO program.”

Washington attests that the importance of the CMEO program cannot be understated.

“Discrimination and harassment undermine the capability of a functioning team and are a disservice to the staff members and beneficiaries we serve at this command. The CMEO program is essential to promoting a positive command climate and fostering an environment where all Service Members can thrive,” Washington said.

“I hope to promote a climate that goes beyond the idea of equality, but rather highlights the need of equity and equitable practices that must be built into everyday occurrences across the command to ensure equality,” added Washington. “Ultimately, I hope to grow NMRTC Bremerton into an example of best practices for the Department of the Navy’s Equal Opportunity and Sexual Harassment programs.”

According to Washington, the best part of her career has been collaborating with talented, passionate and forward thinking individuals who strive to make positive change within the Navy.

“I’ve witnessed the value of intervention and the impact that prevention has on the quality of life of service members and their families. I started my audiology career reactively by treating hearing loss in veterans. Now I proactively try and prevent hearing loss from occurring in service members. Additionally, I serve as a resource to operational commanders and leadership to strategize appropriate interactions and feasible recommendations related to hearing readiness. This is a great gift that gives me purpose and motivation to continue this essential work,” stated Washington.

Washington’s duty as audiologist directly contribute to the Navy surgeon general priority on operational readiness and Navy Medicine’s core mission of producing force medical readiness and medical force readiness.

“The mission of Navy Audiology is to prevent occupational-related hearing injuries and increase medical readiness. Hearing loss can place members in danger, diminish oral and communication skills, and lead to ineffective command control with a potential for mission failure,” said Washington. “Hearing directly impacts the ability/inability to localize and identify sound sources in an environment. The vision of Navy Audiology is to ensure mission readiness in world-wide operations by optimizing warfighter lethality, survivability and situational awareness. We accomplish this through advocacy, outreach, training, hearing protection, medical surveillance, and treatment/rehabilitative services.”

When asked to sum up her Navy Medicine career in one sentence, Washington replied, “My Navy career has been the most challenging and rewarding thing I have ever done, and has propelled me to higher levels

of responsibility that I previously had not considered.”